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ABSTRACT

This document contains the plans for conducting the field studies of Appalachian parents of young children which are part of the Appalachia Educational Laboratory's Home-Oriented Preschool Education Program (HOPE). HOPE is an integrated approach to education for preschool and kindergarten children being developed by AEL's Marketable Preschool Education Program (MPEP). A preface lists the six other reports in the HOPE study. Information provided here concerns the purpose of the HOPE study, a discussion of the methodology used, criteria for site selection, procedures for obtaining data, and a description of the field studies planned, which include a demographic study, a television study, a competency base study of American children (by age 6) and a parents materials study which aims in part to assess the reading level of the parents involved. An appendix gives general instructions for home visitors who will be administering surveys to Appalachian parents. (MS)

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Four Field Studies of Appalachian Parents of Young Children

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PREFACE

The Home-Oriented Preschool Education (HOPE) process, being developed by the Marketable Preschool Education Program (MPEP) of the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) integrates home, group, and televised instruction in its approach to preschool education. The studies reported in this document were conducted to provide AEL and MPEP with information concerning the target audience for HOPE. This document contains the plan for conducting the field studies, indepth reports of the four areas of concentration, and a clarification of the sample adjustment procedures.

The titles of the studies included in this report are:

1. Plan for Marketable Preschool Education Program 1974 Field Studies
2. A Demographic Survey of Appalachian Parents of Preschool Children, Technical Report No. 46
3. A Television Survey of Appalachian Parents of Preschool Children, Technical Report No. 47
4. Study of Effectiveness of Parent Materials for Appalachian Parents, Technical Report No. 48
5. Appalachian Parents' Expectations of Child Competencies, Technical Report No. 50
6. Procedures Used in Adjusting the Field Studies Sample

Plan for Marketable Preschool Education Program
1974 Field Studies

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Purpose of Study

The following studies are planned in order to provide the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) with information concerning the target audience for the Marketable Preschool Education Program (MPEP). The information which is to be gathered will enable the program to effectively locate future test sites, describe the overall target population, and meet the specific needs of the population.

The studies to be conducted will cover four basic areas. First, the effectiveness of various reading levels and styles of presentation in parent instructional materials will be measured. Second, demographic information on preschool families in non-urban regions will be collected and analyzed. Third, a survey of television ownership, reception quality, and viewing habits will be performed. Finally, parent reactions to competencies expected of a six-year-old child will be gathered and compared to the expectancies of a panel of experts on child development.

These studies correspond to items within AEL's scope of work for FY 74, as negotiated with the National Institute of Education (NIE). They are not considered as ends in themselves, but rather as preparation for the future task of developing a marketable program for the preschool children of the region.

Methodology

Before data can be collected which will aid in program decision-making and development, it will be essential to accurately describe the population. The population for MPEP will be defined as the non-urban, three-, four-, and five-year-old children and their parents or guardians in the Appalachian Region. Non-urban will include all persons living in the Appalachian Region, except those living in cities having a population

count of 50,000 or greater and the Appalachian Region will be defined as the 397 counties in thirteen states which the Appalachian Regional Commission has identified as Appalachia.

Criteria for Site Selection

Before conducting the studies, testing sites must be obtained such that the chosen sample of sites will be representative of the Appalachian Region. Several selective criteria have been identified and will be used in selecting test sites. These criteria are:

1. The site must be in the Appalachian Region, as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission.
2. There must be at least one site in each of the seven Appalachian states currently served by AEL and there may be sites in the six Appalachian states not directly served by AEL.
3. Each site must presently have some form of preschool education program in which there are home visitors who visit the preschool children at home.
4. Each state must include at least 72 families, but no more than 215 families will be selected from any one site.
5. The median income of families within a county (or counties) in which a site is located must not differ appreciably from the median income of the Appalachian Region.
6. The per cent of families below the poverty level within a county (or counties) in which a site is located must not differ appreciably from the per cent of families below the poverty level in the Appalachian Region.

7. The per cent of households with television within a county (or counties) in which a site is located must not differ appreciably from the per cent of households with television in the Appalachian Region.
8. The population must be non-urban, as defined above.
9. The site must be willing to participate.

Selection of Sites

The logistical constraints of time and available resources will necessitate the utilization of parents whose children will already be enrolled in home-oriented preschool programs or families who will be visited regularly by a paraprofessional. Several sites have been contacted in the initial phase of the selection procedures. Sites which have been contacted include (by state):

1. Alabama - TARCOG, an educational cooperative (6;90)*
2. Kentucky - Head Start centers in Knott, Letcher, and Pike Counties (8;120)
3. Ohio - Gallipolis in Gallia County (8;135)
4. Pennsylvania - Kittanning in Armstrong County (3;50) and Washington and Greene Counties (4;50)
5. Tennessee - Clinch-Powell, an educational cooperative (10;200)
6. Virginia - DILENOWISCO, an educational cooperative (10;200)
7. West Virginia - Pendleton County (4;50) and Raleigh County (7;50)

Of these initial contacts, all have agreed to participate in the studies. No sites in the other six Appalachian states have been contacted.

*The first number refers to the approximate number of home visitors and the second number refers to the approximate number of families at each site.

Procedures for Obtaining Data

Data collection from parents will be done by the home visitors in the various sites. AEL will train the supervisors of the paraprofessionals who will in turn train their own staff to administer the various instruments which will be used. Home visitors will receive a general instruction sheet (see Appendix A) at the conclusion of their training which will be used by them in the field to standardize their data collection procedures. As per this instruction sheet, the home visitors will inform each parent that although their participation in the studies is optional and they do not have to respond to a particular item, their cooperation would be appreciated. AEL will monitor all stages of training and testing to ensure the validity of the information received.

The timeline for the activities within the field studies will be as follows:

1.	Complete draft of plan and instruments	February 19, 1974
2.	Review of plan by NIE monitor	February 20-21, 1974
3.	Revision (if necessary) of materials/plan	February 25, 1974
4.	Training of supervisors	March 8, 1974
5.	Training of home visitors	March 15, 1974
6.	Collection of data	March 29, 1974
7.	Assembling and collating data	April 5, 1974
8.	Data analyses	April 26, 1974
9.	Report writing	May 20, 1974

Description of Studies

The following sections of this field studies plan will describe each of the four studies to be conducted. Data gathering instruments will be included with the technical reports associated with each study.

Parent Materials Study

Part of AEL's task will be to assess parent materials of different reading levels and presentation styles. In order to do this, the following activities will be planned and carried out. First, three separate activities will be chosen from a list of those activities judged to be most effective in home visitations. Then a guide for each of these activities will be written in three reading levels (approximately second, fifth, and eighth grade difficulty). For each of the nine combinations, two styles of pictorial presentation will then be prepared, one which uses decorative illustrations and one which uses illustrations designed to aid the parent in comprehending the written materials.

Three activities of a given reading level and pictorial style will be given to each parent in the home at the time of testing. Reading level and presentation style will be similar across all three activities for any parent. Thus, there will be six possibile combinations of style and reading level which may be considered. These combinations will be:

1. 8th grade level, decorative illustration
2. 5th grade level, decorative illustration
3. 2nd grade level, decorative illustration
4. 8th grade level, instructional illustration
5. 5th grade level, instructional illustration
6. 2nd grade level, instructional illustration

These six combinations will be presented randomly to parents within each of the sites. The home visitor will ask the parent to read each of the activities and will then role play the child to whom the activities will be presented. The home visitor will record successful completion of each of the three activities. The number of parents who successfully

complete each activity will be recorded for each of the six cells, and a comparison will be made to determine which of the combinations is most effective in communicating with the parents concerned.

Demographic Study

A demographic study will be conducted to determine the demographic parameters of non-urban Appalachian families with preschool children (ages 3 through 5 years). All parents will be asked to respond to a questionnaire and the tabulated data will be used to verify that the sample of parents is typical of all Appalachian families with preschool children. The questionnaire will contain items on the number of children living in the home (by age), the educational experiences of the preschool children (ages 3, 4, and 5), the employment status of the mother, the size of the resident community, educational level of the parents, etc.

Concurrently, a large-scale demographic study based on data from the United States Bureau of the Census will be conducted to determine the demographic parameters of the target population of non-urban Appalachian families with preschool children (ages 0 through 5). A plan for the collection of such data will be developed. The study will be based on variables most relevant to further development of the Marketable Preschool Education Program. Since the field study questionnaire and the large-scale Census Bureau study will have several items or questions in common, each study will serve as a cross-validation for the other.

Television Study

In order to obtain information on the television ownership and reception characteristics of the Appalachian Region, AEL will conduct a TV survey of the homes included in the test sites selected. NIE has specified

eight areas in which information is needed, and AEL will add questions on other viewer characteristics which are considered important by AEL.

Specifically, a questionnaire will be administered to the parent which will determine (1) television set availability, (2) presence of color, (3) size of set, (4) UHF capability, (5) cable capability, (6) reception of stations, (7) quality of reception, and (8) working conditions. In addition, parents will be asked about their children's viewing habits and preferences for preschool television programs which are currently available.

Data from this questionnaire will be used to describe the MPEP target population's television ownership and viewing characteristics. (Backup data will be obtained from A. C. Nielsen Company in order to further validate the representation included in the sample tested. Further information will be included in the data obtained from the Census Bureau, and this will also be used to verify the results of AEL's study.)

Competency Base Study

The Marketable Preschool Education Program is attempting to build a consensual base for its early childhood education curriculum. An invesitgation of the literature in the field led to an initial list of competencies which American children (by age 6 years) possess innately or by acquisition. This initial list was submitted to a National Panel of Child Development Scholars. Their responses to the initial list of competencies were analyzed and a revised list was produced. This revised list was resubmitted to the National Panel as well as being submitted to an Appalachian Panel of Child Development Scholars. The data obtained will be submitted to analytical treatment in an effort to establish those competencies that will form the curriculum base. However, the link between

the competencies responded to by the panels of scholars and the behavioral descriptors will be the reactions of the sample group of parents of Appalachian preschoolers to a similar listing of competencies.

Since the original listing of competencies and the revised list were intended for learned individuals, the language was quite scholarly. Consequently, to obtain parental reactions the language level will have to be reduced considerably. After revising the language of the competency list, it will be submitted to the parents in our test sites. While the Panels of Child Development Scholars responded to all the competencies, each parent will respond to only a subset of the total set of competencies. There are five categories of competencies and each parent will respond to only one of the five categories. Analysis of the parent responses will include calculating means and standard deviations for each item and investigating the relationship of the parent responses to both sets of panel responses.

Analyses and Reporting of Results

Since the data to be collected will be used to describe various characteristics of the target population, tabulations and descriptive statistics will be generated. Non-parametric statistics (χ^2) will be used to test differences between the various treatment conditions in the parent materials study.

After the completion of the events necessary for initiating the field studies, conducting the studies, and analyzing the data obtained, the end products will be a series of technical reports. Each report will address itself to one of the particular scope of work areas described earlier. These reports can be used by the National Institute of Education to determine whether the scope of work was satisfactorily completed, by the MPEP staff to further develop and refine the early childhood education system,

and by other organizations to obtain a clearer picture of the characteristics of the Appalachian families of preschool children.

APPENDIX A

General Instructions for Home Visitors

General Instructions for Home Visitors

***Before administering the surveys inform each parent that they have been asked to cooperate in several small studies of Appalachian families with preschool children. Although their participation in the studies is optional and they do not have to respond to particular items, their cooperation would certainly be appreciated.

1. On the outside of the packet is written a nine-digit number. Please write this number on <u>each</u> of the four surveys on the lines which begin ID # _____. Also, record the name of the site (or program), name of the county in which the home is located, and your own name on <u>each</u> of the four forms.
2. Remove from the packet the "TV Survey" sheets and follow the instructions printed on the sheets. Mark the parent's responses to each item (or answers to each question) directly onto the "TV Survey" sheets. Items 5F and 5H require the use of the TV Picture Quality sheet (three pictures of TV reception).
3. First, remove from the packet the "Parent Materials Survey Sheet." These two sheets are your instruction and answer sheets. Second, remove the three sheets of paper labeled A, B, and C in the lower left corner. These are the sheets that you will hand to the parents <u>one at a time</u>. Third, remove the two plastic bags which contain the puzzle pieces and pictures of bears. Follow the instructions carefully and mark the responses to each item on the two survey sheets. DO NOT AID OR HELP THE PARENT IN ANY WAY.
4. Remove from the packet the sheets of paper titled "Parent Rating Scale of Child Competencies." Give the sheets to the parents and

instruct them to read the directions at the top of the page silently while you read them aloud. Do the two sample questions with the parents to make sure that they know how to fill out the form. Then have the parents respond to each item on the sheets by marking the responses directly onto the sheets. NOTE: If you know that the parents cannot read the items on the sheets, you may read the items aloud to them and then mark their responses directly onto the sheets.

5. Remove from the packet the three sheets titled "Demographic Survey." Ask the parents each question and then you mark the response directly onto the sheets. Items 2 and 3 require you, the home visitor, to add across each row of boxes and insert the total number at each age level. Item 7 requires you to write on the line the exact occupation of the head of household, and the second part of Item 7 requires you to categorize the stated occupation and place the number of the appropriate category on the second line.
6. When these tasks are completed (and before you get to the next home), please put the answer sheets together in the following order and replace them in the packet:
   a. On the top, place the "TV Survey" sheets.
   b. Next to the top, place the "Parent Materials Survey Sheets."
   c. Third from the top, place the "Parent Rating Scale of Child Competencies" sheets.
   d. On the bottom, place the "Demographic Survey" sheets.
7. Please leave the puzzle, the bear cards, and the three Parent Materials sheets labeled A, B, and C in the home when you leave.